

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SYDNEY 00178 280841Z

17

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-11

/067 W

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R 280555Z JAN 76

FM AMCONSUL SYDNEY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6746

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SYDNEY 0178

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PDIP, AS, LE

SUBJ: NEW SOUTH WALES POLICE SEARCH LEBANESE HOMES IN SYDNEY

1. AT 0500 JANUARY 27, OVER A HUNDRED NEW SOUTH WALES POLICE PARTICIPATED IN A SEARCH OPERATION WHICH AFFECTED 28 LEBANESE FAMILIES. ARMED WITH SEARCH WARRANTS UNDER THE FIREARMS ACT THE POLICE SEARCHED EACH ADDRESS, SEIZING MODEST QUANTITIES OF FIREARMS AND SOME EXPLOSIVES AND SMALL AMOUNTS OF MARIJUANA. SEVERAL LEBANESE WERE TAKEN TO HEADQUARTERS FOR QUESTIONING AND IN THE END SEVEN WERE BOOKED ON VIOLATIONS OF FIREARMS ACT, INCLUDING MISS DOLLY KARAM WHO IS THE FIRST PRESIDENT IN AUSTRALIA OF THE LEBANESE NATIONAL LIBERAL PARTY AND EDITOR OF THE LEBANESE TIMES. ACCORDING TO THE CHIEF OF SPECIAL BRANCH, THE SEARCH PRODUCED 29 FIREARMS, INCLUDING SOME HANDGUNS AS WELL AS RIFLES, 18 STICKS OF GELIGNITE, 17 DETONATORS AND A LARGE NUMBER OF KNIVES, INCLUDING "FLICK KNIVES" WHICH ARE ILLEGAL IN NEW SOUTH WALES. SMALL AMOUNTS OF MARIJUANA WERE ALSO SEIZED. THE POLICE SEARCHES WERE A RESPONSE TO AN INCREASING NUMBER OF INCIDENTS OF SHOOTINGS AMONG THE LEBANESE COMMUNITY OVER THE PAST FEW MONTHS. IN ADDITION, THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL DEPUTATIONS OF

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PAGE 02 SYDNEY 00178 280841Z

BOTH RIGHT AND LEFT-WINGS WHICH HAVE CALLED AT THE

LEBANESE CONSULATE GENERAL IN RECENT MONTHS AND ON TWO OCCASIONS RESULTED IN FIGHTING BETWEEN RIGHTISTS AND LEFTISTS, MOST RECENTLY ON JANUARY 25. AT THE SAME TIME THERE HAVE BEEN SOME REPORTS OF GUERRILLA TRAINING IN AUSTRALIA WHICH BOTH THE POLICE AND CONSUL GENERAL FREIJY CONSIDER UNSUBSTANTIATED.

2. LEBANESE CONSUL GENERAL FREIJY ATTRIBUTES MOST OF THE VIOLENCE TO THE RIGHT-WING LEBANESE NATIONAL LIBERAL PARTY WHICH HE CALLS THE "CHAMOUN PARTY." HE DESCRIBES MISS KARAM, WHO IS OUT ON BAIL, AS A "FANATIC DOMINEERING WOMAN." SHE CANNOT, HOWEVER, BE DEPORTED BECAUSE SHE HAS BECOME AN AUSTRALIAN CITIZEN. FREIJY HAS SCRUPULOUSLY SOUGHT TO PRESERVE A NEUTRAL ROLE BETWEEN RIVAL LEBANESE CLIQUES AND CLAIMS THAT LEADERS OF BOTH SIDES SUPPORT HIM. HE DISAPPROVES, HOWEVER, OF THE POLICE SEARCHES AND SAYS THAT HE HAS RECEIVED WIDESPREAD UNFAVORABLE REACTION FROM THE LEBANESE COMMUNITY. ON THE OTHER HAND, CHIEF OF SPECIAL BRANCH REPORTS NUMEROUS TELEPHONE CALLS FROM "RESPONSIBLE LEADERS" EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR AUSTRALIAN SECURITY MEASURES. FREIJY CLAIMS TO HAVE BEEN "ABLE TO CONTROL THE LEFT-WING" BY TALKING TO THEM IN ADVANCE BEFORE INCIDENTS BUT HAS HAD LESS SUCCESS WITH THE RIGHT-WING. HE BLAMES THIS ON MISS KARAM WHO OPPOSES HIS NEUTRALITY.

3. FREIJY IS OPTIMISTIC THAT IF THE NEW TRUCE IN LEBANON HOLDS, THERE WILL BE NO FURTHER DISTURBANCE IN SYDNEY.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SITUATION, POLICE INVESTIGATIONS, MINORITIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 JAN 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: SmithRJ
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976SYDNEY00178
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: DG ALTERED
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760032-0300
From: SYDNEY
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760112/aaaaakdd.tel
Line Count: 92
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: SmithRJ
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <20 MAY 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <16 SEP 2004 by SmithRJ>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NEW SOUTH WALES POLICE SEARCH LEBANESE HOMES IN SYDNEY
TAGS: PDIP, AS, LE
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006